

VZCZCXRO4115

PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR

DE RUEHSQ #0269/01 1601156

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 091156Z JUN 09

FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8301

INFO RUEHDL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0527

RUESEN/SKOPJE BETA

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000269

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2014

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM MK GR KV SR SW

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: SWEDISH DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS VISITS SKOPJE IN PREPARATION FOR EU PRESIDENCY

Classified By: CDA THOMAS NAVRATIL FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) and (d).

1.(C) SUMMARY: Ambassador Bjorn Lavall, Director General of Political Affairs for the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met with Ambassador Reeker during a visit to Skopje in preparation for Sweden's upcoming EU Council Presidency. During the May 28 meeting they discussed the GOM's often unhelpful approach to the issues Macedonia is confronting, including the &name dispute with Greece, interethnic challenges, diplomatic relations with Kosovo, and the impact of the world economic crisis. Ambassador Lavall expects a positive assessment of Macedonia in the next EU Commission progress report and EU visa liberalization to come for Macedonia early next year. He also indicated that Sweden would continue to advocate for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration during its presidency. Swedish Ambassador to Macedonia Lars Freden, Swedish Counselor Anna Craenen and Swedish MFA Desk Officer Kerstin von Hedenberg also attended the meeting. (End Summary)

-----  
GOM STALLING AND INACTION  
-----

2.(C) Ambassador Lavall asked if Prime Minister Gruevski was truly interested in EU integration. Ambassador Reeker noted that PM Gurevski often seems more focused on internal politics than external affairs. He noted the PM's tendency to continue making excuses for not addressing many of the larger issues Macedonia faces, most notably the name dispute with Greece, but also including: economic stability, interethnic relations, relations with Kosovo, and meeting EU benchmarks. The PM has used Macedonia's recent elections, the inauguration of President Ivanov and Greece's European parliamentary elections as excuses to continuously avoid addressing these issues. Gruevski may find another excuse after European elections, but that will be the best time to assess Gruevski's true intentions. Ambassador Reeker said that setting specific objectives and benchmarks for Gruevski had been effective in getting Macedonia to make progress in the past and suggested a similar strategy might be effective in pushing them to resolve current issues.

-----  
NAME ISSUE  
-----

3.(C) Ambassador Lavall was curious as to whether or not the United States had devised a &plan B& for resolving the name issue and getting Macedonia into NATO. Ambassador Reeker cited Deputy Secretary Steinberg's recent visit, noting the U.S. would make additional efforts with both sides to come to an equitable resolution through the UN brokered process, but the U.S. did not intend to dictate a solution to the dispute. Ambassador Lavall indicated that they considered it an issue related to regional security and intended to encourage both

sides to come to a resolution. He noted however that the EU had very little sway over Greece in the issue.

-----  
POSITIVE ASSESSMENT  
-----

4.(C) Ambassador Lavall expects this year,s progress report on Macedonia from the EU Commission to be positive and said they would use the report to try and press Macedonia,s Euro-Atlantic aspirations forward. He also noted Macedonia,s positive visa liberalization assessment and indicated that Macedonia could receive visa liberalization as soon as January 1, 2010. Ambassador Lavall noted that visa liberalization could become complicated however if Serbia did not receive liberalization. Border control issues between Serbia and Macedonia would then become a factor that could adversely affect liberalization for Macedonia. On a separate note, he positively pointed out that Greece had so far given no indication that it would attempt to hinder Macedonia,s visa liberalization aspirations in any way. Ambassador Reeker emphasized the importance of visa liberalization for improving Macedonia,s overall confidence and broadening its international awareness in general. He noted that U.S. Embassy Skopje had been trying to increase programs to send Macedonians abroad in an effort to expand Macedonia,s world view and ultimately increase desire for international cooperation and inclusion.

-----  
INTERETHNIC ISSUES  
-----

SKOPJE 00000269 002 OF 002

5.(C) Ambassador Lavall wanted to know whether ethnic-Albanian dissatisfaction presented any sort of threat to Macedonia,s progress. Ambassador Reeker explained that the ethnic-Albanian community was currently very fractured and felt excluded from the Government. He noted the GOM,s lack of interest in effectively implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement, recent concerns voiced by the ethnic-Albanian parties over the GOM,s intention to equip the Ministry of Interior with military helicopters and weapons, the GOM,s recent diplomatic snubs of Kosovo President Sediju, and rumors that DUI would be leaving the government coalition very soon. Ambassador Reeker said he did not believe rumors about DUI leaving the coalition in the immediate future or have concerns that Macedonia was on the verge of imminent interethnic conflict, but noted that the situation could deteriorate very quickly. Ambassador Reeker pointed out that DUI had recently implied that the government had a five month deadline for the resolution of the name issue before DUI sought other options. Ambassador Reeker also noted the possibility that the PM might use DUI leaving the coalition as an excuse for another round of parliamentary elections.

NAVRATIL